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A 16-page commentary on the June purge in the Presidium of the CC/CPSU

The commentary covers in general the events and their relative significance which led to the open split in the Soviet top leadership and the influence that the purge will probably have on Soviet policy in domestic and international matters.

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There is no doubt that the recent purge in the Kremlin was—if simultaneously we take into consideration its object, its personal consequences, the manner in which it was carried out, and the struggle which preceded it—the most important occurrence within the Soviet Politburo since the death of Stalin. With one stroke the composition of the Politburo changed as essentially as in no other period of struggle within the Kremlin after the death of Stalin in 1953. The only comparison here could be the changes which occurred in the leadership of the USSR Communist Party in the period between the 17th Congress of the party in 1934 and the 18th Congress in 1939. But even at that time, as far as the Politburo is concerned, around fifty percent of its members were not removed, as has happened now.

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It seems, however, that a great disproportion exists between the extent of the personnel changes in the party leadership which were carried out during the recent purge and the eventual influence of these changes on the current Soviet policy. In regard to the influence on current Soviet policy, the personnel changes which occurred within the Soviet Politburo in the years 1953-56 had much greater significance.

When in 1953 Lavrenti Beria was removed from the Politburo and later shot to death, this became the turning point in Soviet policy in one of the most basic matters. The removal of Beria signified, at the same time, the beginning of the liquidation of the focal position and political power of the Soviet secret police. In the Politburo Beria was a representative of this position, which the secret police held in the Stalin period, and his liquidation was a symbol of the change which the "collective leadership" wanted to bring about. Beria had power at his disposal and without his removal it would have been impossible to bring about the change.

In January, 1955, Georgi Malenkov was removed from the position of premier and transferred to the second "set" of Soviet leaders. The departure of Malenkov at that time closed one stage of the struggle for a political line in some of the most fundamental problems. Malenkov represented in the Soviet Politburo the position of departure from the Stalinist principle of priority of heavy industry and professed a defensive attitude in international policy. The principle of maintaining the heavy industry priority in Soviet economic plans as well as the principle of an offensive, in its essence (the problem of form is a separate matter), attitude of Soviet foreign policy were very seriously

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shaken in the period of Malenkov's premiership and prominent position in the Soviet Politburo. His departure was a symbol of the return by the Politburo to the principle of priority of heavy industry in the planning and the restoration in full of the offensive character in Soviet foreign policy. Malenkov in the position of premier and very influential Politburo member would be a very real obstacle to these changes--the proposed changes required his removal.

In 1955 factually and in the middle of 1956 formally, Molotov was removed from influences on Soviet foreign policy. In 1955 the final Khrushchev plan of a Soviet political offensive in the international arena was shaping up. This plan, assuming the use of new means of Communist offensive against non-Communist countries, was a departure from a strategic plan binding previously, in the Stalin period. Molotov was the symbol and leading representative of the old "irreconcilable" line. He was in opposition to the proposed compromise settlement of the conflict with Titoist Yugoslavia as well as to offensive plans under the sign of coexistence. As an influential Politburo member and foreign minister he sabotaged and delayed the introduction of this policy. He came out determinedly against changes in foreign policy at Politburo meetings in March - May 1955 and at the July plenum of the party in 1955. The changes in USSR foreign strategy (Yugoslavia, Geneva, neutral countries) demanded his withdrawal.

Therefore, in all the above-mentioned post-Stalinist "purges" in the Kremlin, the departure of the defeated announced certain changes in various segments of Soviet policy. What is more, the departures were necessary for these changes, for in each case the "defeated" represented

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not the views differing from the general line but the general line itself in individual matters which was to be changed.

The matter appears differently in the case of the recent purge. Khrushchev, in politically liquidating his opponents in the Politburo, did this not for the sake of a change in the general line of the party on any segment but actually for the sake of maintenance of this general line. For none other than Khrushchev, the "victor" in the recent purge, was the author and the chief executor, since 1955, of this general line. On the other hand, the "defeated" in the recent purge entered the struggle asserting the erroneousess of the prevailing general line and demanding its change. Their "departure" was therefore necessary, in contrast to previous post-Stalinist purges, not for changes in Soviet policy but, on the contrary, for the maintenance of the binding Soviet policy and for its stabilization. Consequently, in spite of the fact that the present purge is the most serious of those carried out after Stalin's death, its direct influence on Soviet policy in domestic as well as in international matters can be incomparably smaller; its probable result not a change but a strengthening of the present direction of Soviet policy.

All that has been said above does not mean, of course, that no changes in actual Soviet policy can be foreseen. On the contrary, it is very probable that Soviet leadership will make, in the nearest future, a number of effective moves of the type, for instance, of a step forward in the disarmament talks in London, concrete proposals regarding a new Geneva, or a common declaration with Tito. However, these would all be moves of a tactical character included in the current general line; yet, there are no bases making it possible to foresee any change in the general

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line and changes in the Soviet strategic plan in the international or domestic arena, as a result of the recent purge.

As we have said previously, the unquestionable direct result of the recent purge will be the stabilisation of Khrushchev's domestic and foreign policy, going hand in hand with the strengthening of his position. This is, it appears, the most important political result of the recent purge. In order to realize the full significance of such a stabilization, it is necessary to answer the question, how much was the position and policy of Khrushchev stabilized in the period of the two to three years which preceded the recent purge?

With regard to the struggle which was waged in the Kremlin after Stalin's death, if we examine it from the point of view of development of Khrushchev's power, the strengthening of his views as the general line of the party, as well as the growth of his chances to realize them fully—we clearly see two periods, two stages.

The first stage—from the death of Stalin to the revolt of workers in Poznan in 1956. In this period Khrushchev's position from year to year and sometimes from month to month evidently was growing stronger. At the 20th Congress of the party Khrushchev came out as the "first among equals." The very number of the "equals," however, already comprised only a few names, among which were missing such pillars of the old order as Molotov and Malenkov. The line of Khrushchev's domestic policy and his conception of strategic offensive in relations with the outside world acquired definite shape in 1955. He approached their realization with great energy. His trips, speeches, his projects of resolutions indicated irrefutably that he was determined to direct personally the realization of his plans in

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domestic as well as in foreign matters and, what is not any less important, that in these plans of his he does not meet such obstacles in the Central Committee which he could not overcome. The culminating point of this march forward of Khrushchev and his political conceptions was the secret speech which he delivered at the 20th Party Congress.

In delivering his speech, Khrushchev could not fail to foresee certain unfavorable results which his revelations could produce. Probably he thought they would be only "by-products" which would cause some difficulty, necessitate a number of explanations, interventions, but would not essentially change the general fact that the "main product" of his action would be beneficial for his personal position as well as for the realization of his political conception. Reality showed something different. The de-Stalinization action of the party got out of hand in large measure due to the disclosure by the American State Department of the text of Khrushchev's secret speech. This speech, in connection with the deep, although frequently concealed "thaw" processes within the Communist movement, led to a crisis. The "by-product" turned into a "general product."

The crisis, whose culminating points were the revolt of workers in Pagan, the Hungarian revolution, the bloodless Polish revolution, breaches in the Communist parties in the West--continued in its sharp form until late spring, 1957, and led to changes in the line-up of power in Soviet leadership. This was the second stage of the struggle which was waged in the Kremlin after the death of Stalin, if we examine it from the point of view of development of Khrushchev's power, the strengthening of his views as the general line of the party, as well as the growth

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of his chances to realize them fully. In contrast to the first period, in this stage Khrushchev's power, which grew exceedingly in the previous years, was actually shaken for the first time. His chances of smooth realization of his political conception in international and domestic matters became decidedly disturbed. From the position of "first among equals," Khrushchev was thrown by his opponents, who blamed him for the resulting crisis, to the position of "equal among equals."

It is enough to indicate at least two events in 1956-57 which reveal the difficult position of Khrushchev and the comeback of his opponents.

The first event was the fate of the decision, being pushed by Khrushchev, for the reorganization of the management of Soviet industry. Already in 1955, as it is known, Khrushchev talked much about the necessity of reorganizing the administration of industry. This reorganization was to take on the character of decentralization and regionalization of industrial management. This decentralization, according to Khrushchev's project, was to weaken decidedly the control and authority of bureaucracy at the central level, but it was to strengthen the prerogatives of the leadership at the lower level. What is most important, however, it was to develop, in a degree much greater than up to this time, direct control over industry and its present leaders by the party and the party apparatus, particularly on the local level. Khrushchev's project, therefore, alongside the economic elements (primarily the growth of initiative and operativeness of local industrial leadership as well as the limitation of central administration costs) had as its clear aim the strengthening of the authority and control of that apparatus on which his power leaned and is leaning. Khrushchev's project was clearly aimed against the present

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all-powerful industrial leaders from the group, for instance, of Saburov, in connection with which there is much data to suppose that it was tied to the chief opponents of Khrushchev and, in the first place, with Malenkov. Khrushchev did not conceal his plans during his official speech at the 20th Party Congress at the beginning of 1956. After the Congress, the articles and appearances which explained the need for the reforms proposed by Khrushchev began to increase in number. It was impossible, however, to hear in the Soviet Union any voices of opposition against Khrushchev in this matter. It was evident that Khrushchev was keeping the matter well in hand and it appeared that it was a question of a very short time until he would bring his projects in this matter to life.

In the meantime, the well-known events took place in the second half of 1956. Talk about Khrushchev's projects on industrial problems ceased. But suddenly in November, 1956, without any great and noisy preparations, "Pravda" published the news about the reorganization of industrial management, brought about by a decision of party and government authorities. The careful reader of this decision could, however, easily notice that it not only did not have very much in common with the current Khrushchev project but, on the contrary, that it concentrated an authority in economic matters, invisible until now, in the hands of a narrow group of economic specialists assembled in the State Commission of Economic Planning. The November 1956 decision undoubtedly meant either that Khrushchev had withdrawn from his former projects and the decision expressed his new views, or that Khrushchev's opponents had managed to gain a majority in the Central Committee and that he was forced to agree to a decision which was unjust, from his point of view. In the spring of 1957 it was demonstrated unequivocally which of these two eventualities

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took place in November 1956. In the spring of 1957, Khrushchev's old project again saw the light of day. With "Staghanov tempo" Khrushchev called a plenum of the Central Committee at which a decision was reached for the reorganization of industrial management, this time following the ideas of Khrushchev. A very short time after the Central Committee plenum, the session of the USSR Supreme Council enacted a law, prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the party plenum. This law actually annulled the government decision of November 1956 and was a return to the Khrushchev conception from the 20th Party Congress.

It is therefore a logical conclusion that in the fall of 1956 Khrushchev, not changing his views in the matter of industrial reorganization, was nevertheless compelled to yield to his opponents, for either he did not have at his disposal the majority necessary for their defeat or else he regarded this moment as inappropriate for undertaking a fight, for his opponents could take advantage of the struggle in this matter for the commencement of a general offensive against him at a time when his authority was decreasing and foreign policy found itself on a sharp curve.

It is, however, also significant that even in the spring of 1957, when Khrushchev began his counteroffensive in the matter of reorganization of industry, he succeeded in carrying out his views in a quite particular manner. In contrast with the previous practices in the realization of other Khrushchev projects, he was sponsor of this matter at the Central Committee meeting of the party as well as at the meeting of the USSR Supreme Council. He was not only the chief sponsor of the matter but actually the only one--not one of the Politburo members spoke up, either at the plenum of the Central Committee of the party or at the meeting of

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the USSR Supreme Council, in support of the views of the chief sponsor—Khrushchev. At any rate, none of these speeches was published, although many other speeches—by Central Committee members, officials from Moscow as well as from the provinces, at the Central Committee plenum as well as at the meeting of the Supreme Council—were published. Therefore two possibilities again remain; either none of the Politburo members spoke up at all during the discussion or some Politburo members spoke negatively on this matter while the rest, excluding Khrushchev of course, remained silent. As it is known, it is not customary in the USSR to keep secret the statements of Politburo members supporting the position of the first secretary at the same time that the statements of Central Committee members are published, just as it is not customary to publish statements of Politburo members that disagree with the stand of the first secretary of the party. Whatever eventuality we would therefore accept, it appears that in the Politburo itself Khrushchev's project did not find, discreetly speaking, an enthusiastic reception and probably the matter was not decided until the meeting of the Central Committee. Khrushchev, not by chance, was a sponsor of the matter of reorganization of industry at the Central Committee plenum as well as at the meeting of the Supreme Council. Khrushchev's position and the manner in which he realized his projects before the occurrences in the second half of 1956 looked otherwise, of course.

Let us now take as an example some other events from the same period. Namely, let us look at the fate of the unquestionable adversary of Khrushchev, Vyacheslav Molotov, in the period from June 1956 to May 1957, in comparison with the period from March 1955 to May 1956.

There is probably not the slightest doubt that the period from March 1955 to June 1956 was for Molotov a period of simply catastrophic loss of influence and of official as well as non-official position. It is sufficient to recall the Politburo meetings in the spring of 1955 at which Molotov found himself in isolation, and the plenum of the Central Committee in July 1955 at which Molotov was politically destroyed, and finally the removal of Molotov from the position of foreign minister in June 1956 which, incidentally, he had occupied only formally anyway for some time already. One could cite a number of other facts, but the above-mentioned will probably suffice in order to make it irrefutably certain that Molotov as one of the leading Politburo members was coming to an end at a very fast pace.

From the middle of 1956 the situation changed radically, however. Let us take a look at a few facts. In September, 1956, Molotov was appointed minister of state control. In the hands of an obedient executor of the orders of the first secretary of the party and a person without political ambitions, this position would not have any significant meaning. It could, however, become an essential tool of influence on economy, and especially on finances, in the hands of a person with great authority and name as well as independent plans. And actually such a person was Molotov. More important, however, than the very possibilities which the position offered was the fact that it was a turn, a change in direction in the development of Molotov's position in comparison with the previous year. From March 1955 to June 1956 Molotov lost his positions and official functions step by step. In June 1956 he no longer held any positions with

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which was connected any direct authority over some apparatus. For the position of vice premier, although formally higher than that of minister, does not give direct control over any kind of apparatus and it can be, figuratively speaking, a purely honorary function, that means, with a car and salary but without authority. That is why the obtaining, in late summer 1956, of the post of minister in the government was a turning point in the developing line of his position. If he had taken this position simultaneously with the demission from the post of foreign minister in June 1956, it would be only one more proof of his way downward. However, the fact that he took this post after several months of absolute "unemployment" proves something entirely contrary.

From early spring, 1955, Molotov, although he was still formally foreign minister until June 1956, hardly appeared at all at official functions between the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. His last official public speech, at which he brought up the matter of relations with satellite countries, was in February, 1955, at the USSR Supreme Council. The period from March 1955 to June 1956 was one of great revival of personal, party, diplomatic and ideological contacts between the Soviet Union and the rest of the Communist countries. In none of these contacts, beginning in June 1955, did Molotov participate at all. It went so far that in this period he was not even once a simple Soviet delegate at the numerous anniversary celebrations in satellite countries and he was also seldom seen at receptions in satellite embassies. All this was not accidental. The Molotov line of fully maintaining old forms in relations with satellite countries and continuing the stiff policy toward Tito suffered defeat at the hands of the Khrushchev majority at the July plenum of the Central Committee

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of the party in 1955. It must be admitted that this removal of Molotov from the arena of relations with satellite countries was not a stupid move on the part of Khrushchev. For in 1955 Molotov became the most disliked member of the Soviet leadership among the party active in satellite countries. For instance, his trip to Poland in 1955 could have ended with irritating incidents. And again in the second half of 1956 an important change occurred in Molotov's position. I will mention such a highly significant fact: In October, 1956, Molotov was, besides Khrushchev, a member of the four-man delegation of the Politburo which went to Warsaw to enforce on the Central Committee of the Polish party the maintenance of the old political line and the old personnel make-up of party authorities. This was a function of exceptional importance. It is not important whether the participation of Molotov in this delegation was with the agreement of Khrushchev or whether it was compulsory. In either event, it signified the comeback of Molotov and the weakening of Khrushchev.

From the middle of 1955 Molotov not only almost never, but never appeared actively in public life within the Soviet Union. Without exaggeration it can be stated that in this period almost his only public appearance was the publication, in the "Kommunist" of a letter to the editor with his signature, in which he admits the errors he committed in his speech at the USSR Supreme Council in February 1955. This action was, of course, particularly humiliating for Molotov, the oldest Bolshevik in the Soviet Politburo, when actually he had to admit that he did not realize until now that he lives in a socialist country. Other kinds of public appearances of Molotov--in the form of addresses, articles,

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chairmanship at party conferences, meetings--the kind at which he would instruct, teach, demand, blame--were completely lacking in this period.¹ And again toward the end of 1956 a change also occurred in this matter. Molotov appeared at a meeting of the active of the cultural front in Moscow with a big speech. From what is known, Molotov's speech contained basic problems of party policy on the cultural and ideological front and had an extremely instructive character. If, in connection with this, we take into consideration the period in which it was published, therefore the fears which must have annoyed the Soviet Politburo that the Soviet intellectuals would become infected with Polish-Hungarian "ideological nihilism"--it is necessary to reach the conclusion that the function of Molotov in this matter was extremely responsible and exposed. In the years 1955-56, ~~not many other~~ ^{scarcely any} Politburo member, ~~with the~~ ^{delivered} exception of Khrushchev, ~~made speeches of similar importance.~~

In summarizing, it can be stated that during the year which preceded the recent purge in the Kremlin Khrushchev no longer had at his disposal such authority for realizing his political conceptions as he had in 1955 and the first half of 1956. This year was a period in which it was ~~can~~ ^{hardly} be said that Khrushchev's position in Soviet leadership was stabilized. ~~difficult to talk about the stabilized position of Khrushchev.~~

¹ Molotov actually appeared at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956. However, it was the kind of speech which in the Communist language is called "checked off." As someone has ironically remarked, the sense of this speech amounted to the thought, "I am still alive." I do not need to mention that in this speech were included very strong although hidden accents of self-criticism.

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~~leadership~~ It seems highly probable that in this period Khrushchev was not in a position to consistently carry out all his conceptions in domestic and foreign matters.² The line of Soviet policy was the line of Khrushchev, but in carrying it out he was greatly hampered.

The following can therefore be stated. In 1955, when Khrushchev's conception of domestic and foreign policy was just shaping up, he had full freedom in carrying it out consistently and rapidly. But this was, after all, only the beginning of his policy, the period of the shaping up of his conception. Last year, however, when Khrushchev's conception in basic matters had already come out of the teething stage, his leadership in the Soviet Politburo was shaken. Consequently, as a result of the recent purge, the attainment by Khrushchev of a free hand in the realization of his policy can have a serious influence on the policy itself. The political line will not change but the consequences of its realization, its tempo, its scope may undergo serious changes, attaining an even higher degree of

² I do not at all agree with the theses advanced by some people that ^{such} ~~the~~ central decisions of Soviet policy in the year under discussion ~~as well~~ as the armed intervention in Hungary, the political intervention in Poland, the provocative matter in the Middle East, etc. were not in agreement with Khrushchev's line and were decided by his opponents. It seems that they were decisions by Khrushchev as well as by Molotov. The point of the matter is merely that Khrushchev's opponents took advantage of the exigency (with which Khrushchev also agreed) to make these decisions in the Soviet Politburo against Khrushchev and his policy which led to these events.

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efficiency than it had in 1955. It seems that it is necessary to be prepared not so much for changes in Soviet policy as for its increased pressure, tempo and consequences.

One more question occurs, of course. Namely, did the policy itself, Khrushchev's conception, undergo an essential change in comparison with 1955 and the first half of 1956, as a result of the events which took place in the second half of 1956 and the beginning of 1957? It appears that in spite of everything, the main lines of this policy, the strategic plan of Khrushchev's policy, did not undergo this change. Certain political measures in the second half of 1956 and the beginning of 1957 were compulsory and transitory steps and now everything is tending in the direction of a restoration of the possibility of a full return to the offensive of 1955 interrupted by the events, fatal for communism, in the second half of 1956. ~~_____~~
~~_____~~